

# The Journal of Liberal Religion

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287

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## Sin and Sinners

OLIVER MARTIN

For modern man the concept of sin is the most unpopular of all the ideas to be found in traditional Christian thought—with the exception, perhaps, of that of Hell. Ministers can tell us moderns almost anything, but we don't like to be told that we are sinners. We can be told by implication, of course, but not too directly. Just as a little boy can call another a naughty name and get away with it provided that he says it with a smile, so we demand that the accusation of sin, if it is to be leveled at us at all, be wrapped up in sweetness and smiles.

Many people will speak of their aversion to the notion of sin. It seems that sin is something some people did somewhere or other at some time in the past. Today people only commit "crimes," if you want to speak "scientifically." Their reasoning seems to be as follows: if Christianity is true, there is sin; Christianity is false or not wholly true; therefore, there is no sin. Overlooking the logical error involved the point seems to be that a certain type of theology in the past was responsible for the *idea* of sin, not that the *fact* of sin was cause, in part, for the existence of theology. There is a slight variation in the reaction of some young people to the notion of sin. Theology says they are sinners, and they just *know* they are not sinners. As one youth put it, "I don't sin. I try to be kind to everybody."

One cannot help but contrast some of the modern Christian sophisticates in pews today with the supposedly naive souls that shivered at the words that shot like shells out of cannon from the throat of Jonathan Edwards about two hundred years ago. But it would be difficult to imagine Jonathan Edwards today in a modern pulpit giving one of his sermons—for example, that one called "Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God." We do not believe in quite the same God as he did. His God could love us, but at the same time he could get angry. He was our Father in heaven, but like an old Prussian father he could wield the big

stick if necessary. He was a jealous God, and he stood for no nonsense out of human beings who tried to become gods and usurp his place. It was then that his wrath fell upon them. By contrast our conception of God today, in so far as some people have one, is more nearly that of a dear old grandmother. He is not so much a jealous God as an indulgent one. For some he is the kind of God that warns us good naturally to do his will. But if we don't —well, he won't get angry about it. He won't punish us. Perhaps he will even step in and help us regardless of what we do.

Now it is one thing to reject some historical interpretation of sin, but something quite different and much more questionable to say that the word or idea no longer has any legitimate meaning at all. As long as appearances were kind enough to provide the illusion that the human world was going "onward and upward forever" those who believed that sin was old-fashioned were saved from immediate embarrassment. But today these same people find it difficult to explain recent history in terms of men who never sin but only make "mistakes." They become tired liberals, and the extent of their profundity is about summed up in their phrases damning Hitler as an "insane" man, and regretting the "mistakes" of England, that great democracy and defender of Christian civilization. Hitler may be insane, and undoubtedly England has made mistakes. Such explanations are true so far as they go, but they don't go far enough.

Before the present European war began how often we heard the phrases uttered by those who thought men made only mistakes: "If the rulers of nations would only sit down around a conference table and iron out their differences, war could be prevented." "War is an anachronism." "The heads of nations should realize that everyone loses, no one wins, through war." All these statements are truisms, and as such they express little insight into the nature of human situations. There is an over-emphasis on man's intellect with the consequent neglect of the fact that man has also a will. The presupposition is that bad will is due to misunderstanding. However, an excellent thesis could be maintained to the effect that misunderstanding is due to bad will. For example, there is bad will between Chamberlain and Hitler because they *do* understand each other, not because they don't. This does not mean that one has to choose St. Augustine's or Calvin's account of

human nature as against that of Pelagius and Arminius. It is not as simple as that. What is necessary for some minimum realism in social relations is the recognition that, as regards the moral evil committed by man, men's wills are quite as responsible as their intellects. In other words, men are sinners, and any analysis or solution of social affairs (and individual affairs) that does not take this into account must necessarily be superficial and inadequate.

But is not the statement that all men are sinners merely another truism? Of what practical advantage, it may be asked, is it to believe in such a theological abstraction, even assuming it to be true? These questions are legitimate, and the critic has a point. When the "sin theory" of history becomes a substitute for scientific analysis of individual and social events it proves exceedingly sterile and impotent. However, its worth lies in its being supplementary to scientific analysis. It must be shown that whether one does or does not believe that he is a sinner really *makes a difference*. Practice may not constitute truth, but certainly whatever is true must be practical. If so, let us consider for a moment a few interesting facts with regard to the nature of sin. Let us assume that man is a sinner, and then let us see what happens if this is denied.

If all the sins but one of which man is capable were listed in one column, a second column would contain the one remaining sin. What would this one *qualitatively* distinct sin be? It would be the sin of not admitting that one is a sinner. There is a subtle logic here of the nature of sin that should not escape us. Let man commit any other conceivable sin and it simply defines him as human. Being less than God, man is less than perfect. Human nature is to some extent evil and sinful simply because man is man and not God. In saying this one simply recognizes a fact; no justification of any particular sin is implied. Also, one may accept all this without at the same time accepting the much more extreme thesis that man's nature is totally depraved.

Now notice what happens when one denies that he is a sinner. He is, in effect, saying that he is God. For only God can do no wrong, commit no sin. Therefore, if John Doe as a human being denies that he is a sinner, he is denying his own human nature. He is not only pretending to be something he *in fact* is not, but also

something which he could not possibly be. He is pretending to be another Christ. He is saying that he is God made flesh again here in the twentieth century. At least this is the implication from the standpoint of Christian orthodoxy.

It is all the more embarrassing for the liberal in religion if he should deny that he is a sinner. Having already denied the deity of Jesus, by denying also that he is a sinner he is implicitly affirming not that he is another Christ *but rather that he is the Christ himself*. One may rightly ask: what business has he on this earth? Why is he not in heaven where logically he belongs? At this point, however, John Doe shrinks from the consequences of his own logic. It is a little too much to present himself either as God, Christ, or as concrete evidence of the second coming of Christ. Of course, some people are less shy than John Doe, and they do carry through. But such persons are usually either in insane asylums or are heads of nations.

Now if you ask a person if he is God, if he is always right, and so on, he will laugh and, of course, say no. But with all of us, our denials are often confined to words and do not issue in action. We have special state institutions to deal with people who admit that they are God; the difficulty comes in dealing with those who act like it but won't admit it. It is a sad commentary on the state of Western civilization today that one who successfully *acts* as if he is God can become the head of a nation, whereas one who simply *says* he is God must be condemned to strut the grounds of a state institution. The reward of inconsistency is success; the price of consistency is the asylum.

The moral of all this for liberal religion is that there is only one right way, theoretically and practically, to deny the dogma of the Trinity, and that there are two wrong ways of doing so. If John Doe, as an erring orthodox Christian, denies that he is a sinner he should, to be consistent, advocate a change in the creed of the church. It should read as follows: "I believe in the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost, and John Doe." On the other hand, if John Doe as an erring Unitarian denies that he is a sinner he should, to be consistent, advocate the following change in what he and his religious brethren affirm: "I believe in God and John Doe." The ingenuity of man knows no bounds. There are many ways in which man may identify himself with God, but they are all dif-

ferent versions of the same error—the denial of the limited nature of man.

Liberalism in the Christian religion should imply a rational, open-minded, as opposed to a dogmatic, approach to the relationship of man to God. An essential difference between it and authoritarian Christianity lies in the method of solving certain problems concerning the relation of man to God. Liberalism which is wholly secular is something quite different. Its God is man in some form or other—either man as potential, men in the aggregate, or abstract humanity. But when modern man in his self-righteousness thought he was becoming emancipated in giving up the old-fashioned idea of sin, he was actually committing the greatest of all errors. Man must hold to something as absolute. If he doesn't find the Deity in a transcendent God, then he deifies himself, an institution, a nation, or a culture. All this is not merely theoretical, but very practical. From the pragmatic standpoint it *makes a difference* whether or not one is conscious of and admits his sinfulness, whether or not one deifies the temporal and the relative.

There is much in our modern secular culture that is an irrational concoction of just plain foolishness and nonsense; and the more intoxicated he becomes the less able is modern man to recognize his hallucinations for what they are. He becomes hard-put to explain his own troubles. Having put aside faith in a transcendent God, he goes hunting for a more convenient absolute. Some make gods out of themselves. However, competition is keen in this respect, and while many are called, few are chosen, for consistency demands that if anyone is absolute all others must be rendered relative. It is fairly certain that when one thinks he is God, to others his actions are liable to seem rather satanic.

Since worshiping oneself always has proved rather unsatisfactory, the absolute is usually found somewhere else. In modern times it has been found in the state or nation. Instead of the individual's being the measure of all things it is a group that sets itself up as the final judge and authority. It may judge, but it never recognizes that it may come under the judgment of anything greater than itself. The will of a group becomes absolute. It cannot sin. But again, is there anything more certain than that when a nation assumes that it is sinless, and hence God, it is going to act like the devil?

If in the world at large, the secular world, so much evil can result from man's forgetting or denying that he is sinful, how much more evil must result when an organized Christian institution commits this greatest of all sins.

What distinguishes or should distinguish, those who are members of a Christian church from those who are not? Is it that non-church members are sinners whereas church members are not sinners? Certainly not. No, the difference is rather this—that true Christians admit they are sinners. They repent, ask forgiveness, are sorry for their sins, and attempt to do something about them. Of course, if they don't, then Christianity is perverted. Christianity is also perverted when the church is unduly deified. Should the church come under the judgment of God, or should God come under the judgment of the church? Certainly not the latter for then the church as an organized body is pretending that it can never do wrong, that it is always right. Such an attitude produces an absolutism that is death to true Christianity. It was the genius of Protestantism to recognize this truth, although all organized Christianity is in danger of forgetting it.

It will be said, of course, that the essence of all that has been said may be admitted without the necessity of conceding that there is a personal God whose will man may defy and against whom man commits his sin. We may admit that we do wrong to ourselves and our fellow man, that we are not perfect, without thereby committing ourselves to the belief that perfection already exists. A complete answer to this position cannot be given here for it would demand an inquiry into the meaning of God, the good, and the perfect. We will concede this to the critic, that the notions of "perfection" and the "good" in much of Christian theology may be unsatisfactory, that the Platonic heritage has not always been for the best; also that the substitution of theological for scientific categories is both futile and false. Indeed, whatever is said here is not intended to contradict, but rather to be compatible with, that scientific attitude towards social questions which is identified with humanism. It may be remarked, however, that both individual and social sin presupposes at least this—that in a moral situation when alternatives are presented there are times when men know what they ought to do but lack the strength of will to do it. Do away with the "ought" and morality can have no meaning. As-

sume it and there is presupposed the possibility of objective truth in the matter of values. Now how values can be objective if they have no substantial existence (God) it has been difficult for some to conceive. To be objective they have to do more than merely subsist in some spooky realm, or exist in one or more human brains.

Now if the possibility of sin implies the objectivity of values, there are in general two ways in which one may deny that he can possibly sin. The first is what may be called authoritarianism. The objectivity of values is admitted, but it is denied that some one or a group of individuals can ever be wrong in the judgment or application of them. As examples, the dogma of Papal Infallibility may be cited, or the way in which many professing Christian husbands and wives treat each other. The other method of denying the possibility of sin is relativism. This is accomplished by denying, implicitly or explicitly, the objectivity of values, in which case the value-judgments of an individual or a group of individuals are always true simply by definition. The will of man is the final judge; it can never *be* judged. Examples of relativism are: the manner in which most people think about economic and political policies, the meaning of patriotism implied in the phrase, "my country, right or wrong."

It is an interesting fact that even theoretically, authoritarianism and relativism have much in common. From the standpoint of practice there is hardly any difference at all. Now the pragmatic criterion of meaning is applicable here. Theoretical differences that ultimately and in the long run are not reflected in practice are not very meaningful. This may help to explain why sometimes authoritarianism in religion may go hand in hand with a relativism in secular affairs—for example, the compatibility of Roman Catholicism with a "good" type of fascism. And there is some degree of truth in the charge that Barthianism and similar types of theology are guilty of the aforementioned error. The answer to the anti-rationalism of relativism is not a faith which is equally non-rational.

Neither authoritarianism nor relativism on theoretical grounds allows any place for the concept of sin. (Of course, the "authorities" may find the concept very useful to apply to those over whom they have authority!) Nor does either view in practice re-

sult in those acts which, if the possibility of sin be admitted, are undoubtedly virtues, namely, humility, forgiveness, and repentance. The leaders of an authoritarian church have no need of forgiveness or repentance, for they always presume to know truly the will of God. In our modern nationalistic system those in whom the authority of a state resides do not recognize those virtues which make life at its highest possible, because due to the very structure of that system weakness would be implied, and in any case the right and the good are constituted by the act of willing certain ends and the power to create the means of their realization.

Those who have denied the possibility of the kingdom of God being realized *in time* have usually rested their case on the brute fact that men are and always will be sinners, and that the kingdom of God can only be composed of those whose sins have been washed away. However, strange as it may seem, it may be the case that only sinners can constitute the society of the kingdom, provided only that there is the absence of just one sin, namely, that of not admitting that one is a sinner. For as we have seen, for individuals to live together peacefully and happily it is not necessary that they be perfect; it is only necessary that they become aware of and admit their imperfections. And for groups to exist together harmoniously within a nation it is not necessary that each be absolutely good; what is required is that each recognize its own limitations. And, finally, for nations to exist and mutually enhance the life of each other, it is not necessary for each to be perfect and always right. What is required is that each recognize that politically its rights are not absolute. This is simply recognizing that all cultures and institutions have an element of imperfection that on all rational grounds prohibits their deification.

When man will have corrected the greatest of all his errors—the belief that he is sinless, that he is no longer under the judgment of a jealous God—he will have done much toward bringing the kingdom of God to earth. And after all, is not this part of the essence of the Christian message? Yet it appears that man must take a great deal of punishment before he can learn to distinguish his multifarious psuedo-deities from the true God.

## Can Science Accept God?

M. C. OTTO

### I

A proper answer to this question depends upon the definition of the words Science and God. The first task must therefore be to settle upon these definitions. This is a difficult thing to do. Science and God have in the course of time appeared in such various contexts of life and literature that they have acquired not only a rich connotation, but many fringes of obscure meaning. This is true in particular of the word God, which has gathered a bewildering wealth of such fringes to itself, yet it is likewise true of the word Science, even if not to the same degree.

Beginning then with science, the less difficult term of the two, we must deliberately simplify the situation and select some one meaning as most truly representative. Taken comprehensively, science denotes the great company of scientific workers, the institutions and organizations engaged in furthering scientific achievement, the accumulated knowledge resulting from the scientific enterprise, and the technique of observation and demonstration usually referred to as scientific method.

For convenience of understanding, let us select this technique or method as representative of science in its totality. Nor will this in any way do violence to the meaning we seek. A conclusion arrived at on this basis cannot be inconsistent with other aspects of science since these take their character from the nature of scientific method. Workers, organizations, accumulated results are scientific because of their involvement in scientific method and for no other reason.

What, then, is scientific method? Stated in the fewest possible words, it is a way of investigation which relies, and relies solely, on disciplined empirical observation and rigorously exact proof. Its aim is objective verification. And by objective verification is meant, first, that the investigator's wishes and wants, his aesthetic, moral, or religious predilections, his faith in or desire for a par-

ticular conclusion, have been carefully eliminated as determining factors; and, second, that proof extends beyond inner or personal conviction, to outer or public demonstration.

It is often maintained that the differentiating mark of science is the reduction of the subject matter of investigation to a strictly quantitative basis. We are assuming that science may be more fairly and at the same time more intelligently defined in the broader terms we have adopted. So defined, the indispensable characteristic is not to be found in *the peculiarity of the material or subject matter under investigation*, but in the *particular way the subject matter is dealt with* whatever it may be. And that way is what we have called objective verification. A procedure is scientific to the extent that it rejects everything as evidence or conclusion which has not been and may not be subjected to a test that is in some sense experimentally decisive and always non-individual.

## II

If we now try, in the same summary manner, to settle upon a meaning for the concept God, the difficulties encountered are almost insuperable. Everyone knows that the concept God is incomparably older and more elusive than the concept science. Past meanings of it go back to misty times which antedate historical records, and current meanings reflect the attitudes of widely different types of men and every stage of civilization. This is to say nothing of those meanings having their source in mystic states of consciousness which by hypothesis altogether baffle description.

There is thus no such thing as a generally received conception of God. Nor can such a conception be deduced from the statements or the conduct of those who declare their belief in God. It is just as well to recognize first as last that we are undertaking to settle upon the meaning of a word which comes out of the past trailing clouds of vagueness and which denotes so many things in the present that it seems to be one of those which John Stuart Mill referred to as "afflicted with incurable ambiguity." The best we can hope for is a definition which shall fairly represent the indispensable residue which countless revisions in meaning have left intact.

The gods came originally and they remain, when and where

they do, in response to men's sense of dependence upon actively cooperating superhuman powers. A god was and is assumed to be a helper in the attainment of wants, let the wants be what they may, which are believed to lie beyond attainment through human effort alone. The concept God is a sanctuary in which unnumbered hopes and fears are crowded together, many of them logically or morally incompatible. Therefore a connotation satisfactory to everyone cannot be devised. But if we are willing to venture in where better sense might fear to tread we may arrive at this working definition: An essential meaning carried by the term God from the remote past to the very present—a lowest denominator definition—must include at least this much: 1. A something more powerful than man, separate from, or at any rate distinguishable from the landscape of life; 2. A being that is sufficiently a person to have purposes and other psychic attributes; and, 3. A being of such kinship with humanity as to be helpfully at work in the material world and in human affairs.

### III

With these definitions we return to our question. And the answer should not be a matter for debate. The question is rhetorical. It permits of only one answer. And the answer is, No. Affirmative answers have often been made to it and are still being made, but they do not stand examination. Bluntly put, God and Science are irreconcilable opposites. As the one grows in authority over the mind, the other declines. To ask "Can Science accept God?" is like asking whether a blind man can see, or whether red is ever blue. Naturally, it is less obvious that Science and God are irreconcilable than that blindness and seeing, or red and blue, are. We know what we mean by blindness and seeing, or red and blue, but we have only a hazy notion of Science or God. The moment the two ideas are defined with some degree of accuracy, or the factual circumstances are really examined, the two fly apart and cannot be reunited. Most of us have never tried to get a clear idea of either one. We add a hazy notion of Science to a hazy notion of God and go off believing that two times confusion equals clarity.

This I am bound to believe is the situation. Stated thus bluntly the conclusion is perhaps too easily mistaken for dogmatism. The question must consequently be examined more fully. And the pith

of it is this. A being such as God would introduce a variable influence that by its very nature is unpredictable, hence not subject to calculation. No scientist could employ the *experimentum crucis* which from the beginning of modern science has been regarded as absolutely essential to scientific method. There would be no way of detecting the presence or absence of the divine variable, no way of measuring its effect, no way of bringing it to book or trying it out. The most rigorous investigation, the most scientific prediction, might at any time be nullified by an interference which there was no way of detecting or anticipating. Surely no argument is required to prove that the positive recognition of an incalculable factor of this sort would be ruinous to scientific workmanship.

The scientist does not claim to know all there is to be known, and he is therefore not in a position to deny a God's existence as a theoretical possibility. But he cannot admit God's existence as an actuality and maintain the integrity of his procedure as a man of science. It is a commonplace that scientific achievement is the direct result of a radical change from one principle of explanation to another, from explanation in terms of a Final Cause to explanation in terms of secondary causes. And this shift has involved the rejection of every agency not subject to the possibility of experimental control. Whatever may have been or may be the ground for belief in God, whatever may have been or may be the values associated with the belief, the attitude of mind demanded by belief in God is the exact contrary of the scientific attitude. To try to bring Science and God together is like trying to marry two people who refuse to be introduced to each other.

#### IV

We have attempted to put into practice Plato's advice, "Whither the argument leads, thither let us follow." And this has led to a conclusion which cannot but be distasteful to many persons who are sincerely and intelligently interested in the question. Unless such persons are so thoroughly committed to what they believe as to prevent them from entertaining the very possibility of another view, they will be disturbed by the verdict and will want it annulled. One recourse will readily occur to them. They will appeal to eminent scientists as to a court of higher authority. Who,

if not eminent scientists, they will think, should be able to speak the last word on whether Science can accept God?

Well, what is the verdict of the scientists? This is another thing which should not be hard to determine, but is. Neither those who have quoted the scientists, nor the scientists themselves who have expressed opinions, have been sufficiently exact in their analysis of the problem. And they have often been careless in their expression of opinion. The printed output on the relation of science to religion, of which the question before us may be taken to be a phase, has been very large. It has been so large that the selection of representative parts of it for study would be embarrassing were it not also a fact that an unmistakable sameness runs through the whole of the material. The same ideas and the same pattern of reasoning constantly recur. All that may reasonably be expected in the way of novelty as one proceeds through a succession of addresses, articles, and books, is a fresh arrangement of the facts adduced as evidence, a new turn of phrase, or a happy metaphor or illustration not met with before.

The main lines of proof have apparently been pretty well exhausted, at least for the present. It is scarcely too much to say that, so far as argument is concerned, having read two or three of the best examples, one has read them all. And whatever the merits or demerits of the various contributions, ambiguity pervades the discussion as a whole. Sometimes it settles down like a fog, effacing all boundary lines and swallowing up everything in grey indefiniteness; more often it resembles the opalescent haze of Indian Summer, through which objects are still seen, but indistinctly, and in the softer coloring congenial to the feelings.

## V

Possibly our best source material is the Radio Symposium broadcast in England a few years ago, and since then published as a book entitled, *Science and Religion*. The various chapters were contributed by well known leaders in physical and biological science, anthropology, philosophy, and religion, and are conspicuous for ability, learning, and honesty. While the voice of institutional authority may be detectable in one or two instances, the addresses taken as a whole maintain an unusually high level of

intellectual and literary excellence, and of ethical sensitivity in the handling of evidence. Here, if anywhere, it should be possible to get the decisive kind of verdict desired.

The spokesmen for science in this *Symposium*—Sir Arthur S. Eddington, Professors J. S. Haldane, Julian Huxley, B. Malinowski, and Sir J. Arthur Thomson—are unanimous in defense of the religious attitude and the right to believe in the God which it implies. Says Mr. Huxley: “Science may destroy particular theologies; . . . it cannot destroy religion, because that is the outcome of the religious spirit, and the religious spirit is just as much a property of human nature as the scientific spirit.” Says Sir J. Arthur Thomson: “What we are surest about is that we need *more* science and *more* religion—ever so much more.” Sir Arthur Eddington, speaking of the earnest Christian’s wish to know whether he may still “conceive God as the Father, from whom comes power and guidance,” makes this statement: “I doubt whether there is any assurance to be obtained except through the power of religious experience itself; but I bid him hold fast to his own intimate knowledge of the nature of that experience. I think that that will take him closer to the ultimate truth than scientific codifying and symbolizing can reach.” Mr. B. Malinowski, who finds no ground in his scientific knowledge for conflict between science and religion, but who confesses that he nevertheless experiences that conflict within his own life, makes this wistful remark: “. . . through it all and above all, though I am unable to worship any Divinity, I have almost come to worship, certainly to revere religion.” And no statement could be more straightforward in its endorsement of theism than Mr. Haldane’s: “What makes confusion at present is the mistaking, by representatives of both Science and Religion of imperfectly seen and interpreted reality for full reality . . . The only ultimate reality is the spiritual or personal reality which we denote by the existence of God.”

In the same chapters of the *Symposium* there is another layer of opinion and, relative to our question, a deeper layer. It consists of declarations respecting the autonomy of science. The quotations just cited are the views of their authors considered not as scientists, but as human beings interested in both science and religion. But statements are also made by the authors in their capacity as scientists. Here are three examples. “Biology,” says Mr. Hal-

dane, "has nothing directly to do with religion, and by no possibility can religion, such as we know, be based on biology." Sir J. Arthur Thomson is equally forthright. He says: "It will be an evil day when science at work stops to dance to any piping of poetry, philosophy, or religion." And according to Mr. Huxley, there is one point on which the man of science, if he is worth his salt, refuses to compromise: "He refuses to believe that any religious system is right or can satisfy man in his capacity as truth-seeker, if it denies or even pays no attention to the new truths which generations of patient scientific workers painfully and laboriously wrest from nature." "I mean," he adds, "that it is the business and the duty of the various religions to accept the new knowledge we owe to science, to assimilate it into their systems, and to adjust their general ideas and outlook accordingly."

In other words, religious needs must not interfere with the complete independence of scientific investigation; they must stand ready to adapt themselves to new scientific facts and ideas. Just *how* this is to be done is left for the theologians to decide, but not *whether* it is to be done. "I do not know," says Mr. Huxley, "how religion will assimilate these facts and these ideas; but I am sure that in the long run it will assimilate them; . . . and I am sure that the sooner the assimilation is effected the better it will be for everybody concerned."

Now if these declarations do not claim sovereignty for science, freedom from outside demands, theistic demands among the rest, it is difficult to see what is intended by them. An interesting side light makes this claim more apparent.

It happens that one of the scientific contributors to the *Symposium* does not concur with his colleagues in granting an independent status to science. The reason is that his religion will not permit him to crowd God out of any field. Father C. W. O'Hara, professor of mathematics and astronomy, concedes that "the gap between science and religion has been closed." This, however, is not because religion is ready to adapt itself to science, but because science has learned an "improved way of interpreting Nature," a way that brings its truths into harmony with the truths of religion. If any disagreement arises, science and not religion must give place.

As seen by Father O'Hara, religion "is concerned with a set of facts regarding God, what God is in Himself and His relation to man; and concerning man, his origin, his main work in this world and his future destiny." Religion, not science, "teaches with certainty the vital truths concerning man's development in this world in order that he may reach a final state of perfection." Religion tolerates and encourages what he calls "subsidiary schemes that promote the happiness of mankind on earth," so long as they do not care for the body at the expense of the soul. It does not and it cannot "admit any alternative primary scheme." His position seems to me to boil down to this. Let us live and work together as equals, provided it is understood that I am boss on the job. And that seems to me the proper way to talk, if it is what you have to say. But if that is what you have to say, you are saying something which, from the viewpoint of science, is inadmissible, if not without meaning.

## VI

There is no good reason for protracting this investigation. Any one who is not yet convinced will not be convinced by additional evidence along the same line. For myself the conclusion is unavoidable that there is no concurrence whatsoever between God and science, between faith in divine providence and faith in scientific procedure. So-called harmonizations are agreements to disagree. "Well," someone may ask, "what difference? Why force the issue? Why not be satisfied with the conventional compromise which seems desirable, indeed necessary, to minds of the first rank? And, especially, why risk disturbing that larger number for whom the problem has no existence; who want the benefits which science can bestow and who feel the need of a God as the rational ground of moral conduct?"

One or two reasons for refusing this easy compromise may be briefly considered. In the first place, nothing is gained in the end by wavering loyalty to truth. That much we should all be able to agree upon. Truth is slowly gained and quickly lost. Thomas Huxley was much too optimistic, in common with many others who lived in that forward-striding period, when he said: "Time,

whose tooth gnaws away everything else, is powerless against truth." So was William Cullen Bryant, in his popular verses:

"Truth crush'd to earth, will rise again;  
The eternal years of God are hers."

Einstein goes farther, though I am not sure that in this matter he goes far enough. "Truth," he says, "is like a marble statue in a desert, forever threatened with burial by shifting sands. Willing hands must be forever at work to keep it clear and shining in the sunlight."

The trouble with most of us is that we take truth to be an abstract entity, a unitary, self-subsistent essence independent of time or circumstance. We think that a man may, so to speak, take it or leave it, but can do it no damage. Now this kind of truth is not the kind that is constantly at issue in daily experience. It is always the truth of some statement, of some idea or attitude or principle which is in doubt. And when some truer statement, idea, attitude, or principle is "crushed to earth," when another less true is accepted in its place, the loss can never be made good.

A truth crushed to earth will *not* rise again for the simple reason that the circumstances which gave it life cannot be recaptured. Mankind must remain forever the poorer by just so much as the defeated truth represented. Voluntary vagueness or indecision where truth is at stake should therefore never be condoned no matter how eminent or sincere the persons who are guilty of the practice. Truth is incredibly elusive even when the lights are bright on the search for it. How is it to be found at all when they are dimmed?

In the second place, nothing is gained in the end by a compromise which leaves the situation just where it was. What the times demand is a critical appraisal of our faith in science and our faith in God with the purpose of bringing them both within the larger venture of mankind—the attainment of a greater measure of general welfare. We need to organize scientific method, scientific knowledge, and the idealizing propensity of men in a common endeavor. This is exactly what is not achieved, and cannot be achieved, through an artificial unity of antagonistic aims. The advocated "harmony" between Science and God in no way furthers the discovery of a workable interrelation of what we know

and what we long for. On the contrary, such purely verbal harmony interferes with actual harmony. It perpetuates the traditional division of the world into two metaphysical hemispheres, one of ultimate fact and one of ultimate value. To hide this division behind declarations of mutual respect only adds to the difficulty of overcoming it.

The present compromise may temporarily serve the interests of institutionalized science and institutionalized religion by keeping them out of each other's way, but it will not serve the wider and deeper interests of mankind. It is precisely this dualism in outlook which more than any other challenges our scientific intelligence and the ingenuity of our social mind. Instead of being glossed over or obscured, the discordance between scientifically ascertained truth and theistic idealism should be moved into the clearest visibility and forced upon our attention.

At all events, misleading directions are worse than no directions at all. Time that might be spent finding a way out is wasted in getting more thoroughly lost. We are pushed deeper and deeper into the tangle. Since facts and values interpenetrate; since what we hope and work for takes shape out of the world we know, and knowledge which we could not otherwise acquire, comes to us because of what we hope and work for; since we are hemmed in by environmental conditions, so that even our aspirations are compelled to respect them; it follows that a happy outcome depends upon bringing the real and the ideal together, on equal terms, in programs of human betterment.

Whatever may be true regarding the existence of God, or the all-sufficiency of science, no guidance is to be derived from the cryptic messages which scientists and religionists, working back to back, now and again toss over their shoulders to each other and then relay to the rest of us. The scientific spirit and the spirit of theistic religion are not in accord. The human enterprise will not be advanced by acting as if they were. Only one thing will be gained: a false sense of security while we press on into worse confusion.

# The Inner Structure of Religion

C. J. BLEEKER

## I

This article is a short introduction to the phenomenology of religion.<sup>1</sup> The significance of what I shall set down can be summed up as follows :

1. It brings us into close contact with the concrete life of religion. This is useful. There is too much theorizing about religion without solid knowledge of what it is.
2. It helps us understand the typical structure of religious life. We detect the inner harmony, the divine wisdom in the totality of religious phenomena. We discover that religion is more than a lifeless idea, that it is an attitude which affects the whole life of man.
3. It gives us a broad outlook on the field of religion, because we learn to seek for true religion, whatever it may be, and not to investigate it on the basis of Christian principles only. There is no danger that we shall lose our faith; rather we shall enrich the spirit.
4. It sheds new light on the problem with which we are struggling: the reorientation of liberal Christianity in the modern world, the rewording of our free Christian message to this century. It helps us to understand the divine necessity of our liberal religious ideas and of our efforts to renew Christianity. It shows us the way we have to go.

<sup>1</sup>The term phenomenology here has nothing special to do with the philosophical movement associated with the names of Husserl and Scheler; "the phenomenology of religion" here refers to that science which seeks to describe accurately the structure, both subjective and objective, of religious phenomena, to discover the network of intelligible reasons which unify them, and thus, to classify them. For a brief history and a characterization of the methods of "the phenomenology of religion" see G. van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, trans. J. E. Turner (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1938), chapters 107-110. [Editor's Note.]

## II

Every science which deserves the name has to obey its own strict laws. This is true also for the phenomenology of religion, or phenomenology as I shall hereafter call it. Before we can start the study of this science, therefore, we must inquire into its method and subject matter. Phenomenology studies the phenomena of religion, the many-sided forms in which religion appears. The task of our science is to detect the inner order and hidden harmony of these phenomena. In performing its task our science must follow a certain method. The easiest way to define this method is to compare ours with kindred sciences, which although working in other directions are often an indispensable help to phenomenology.

First I will mention the history of religions, with ethnology and folklore as its ancillaries. In this science religions are studied separately, in whole or in part; or the crossing lines along which the various religions influence each other are described. Both of these approaches to the history of religions furnish us with invaluable material. A second science, which is also a neighbor to phenomenology, is the psychology of religion. This science investigates the laws of the religious processes which go on in the minds of individuals or masses of people. The psychology of religion has borrowed its tools and methods from modern experimental psychology. Though the psychology of religion acknowledges the unique value of religion, the acknowledgment is not whole-hearted; the tendency is always to explain religious processes by reducing them to natural factors in the mental structure of mankind. To phenomenology this reduction provides no satisfying explanation. A religious phenomenon, however queer it may be, is understood only when it is understood religiously, that is, when it is brought into connection with God, however strange to our modern, Western value-judgment the content of this word God may be. A third science which has affinity to phenomenology is the philosophy of religion. This science, giving its attention to the essence, to the inner nature of religion, tries to justify the truth of religion by means of a philosophical theory. Phenomenology is not concerned with the abstract question as to the essence of religion but rather attempts to bring to a focus the concrete world of religious forms in order to understand these forms. Nor does phenomenology

raise the question whether there is a divine reality behind religious phenomena. It takes the position that religious men, when they earnestly bear witness to knowledge of a higher world, are to be believed.

Phenomenology studies religious phenomena from a viewpoint different from that of the three kindred sciences already mentioned. From the viewpoint of phenomenology religious forms are real phenomena, in the sense of the Greek verb *phainomai*, which means "to appear, to shine forth." In these phenomena we perceive the reflection of a holy Light in the background, a deeper hidden divine reality. We shall never succeed in unveiling the hidden reality in the background. That remains the holy secret of the faithful and of religion itself. It is a great error of our days of insatiable sensation and shameless curiosity to suppose that we may penetrate the secret chambers of religion. The inner sanctuary is closed; our domain is the outer court. A wise scholar will accept this necessity voluntarily, for he knows that in this respect phenomenology shares the lot of every science in that our knowledge is confined within narrow limits. But at any rate a religious phenomenon bears witness to the appearance, the shining forth of a divine life. Phenomenology, as the name indicates, seeks the logos of the phenomena. In this case "logos" means: (1) the inner structure of the phenomena, (2) the rhythm by which the phenomena well up from the source of the divine reality, and (3) the inner harmony of the different ways by which man is related to the divine. To sum up: phenomenology is the study of the logos of religious phenomena. This logos is the rhythm of the divine dynamic and the meaning of many of the problematic aspects of religious behavior.

### III

But how shall we find this logos of the religious phenomena? The scholar, in coming to grips with these problems, will hear around him a many-voiced choir, singing various religious melodies, but all glorifying God and the eternal values. But he will hear it only if he is ready to listen for a time and not join with the choir. In other words, he must adopt the only attitude that

can be called scientific, he must *listen* and let religious people speak without interference. We modern Western peoples, proud of our civilization and our technical accomplishments, find it difficult not to idealize our own religious convictions, undervaluing the religious ideas of others. We have to learn to be objective and to listen quietly. Then we will discover that the many-voiced choir of religious phenomena, made up of voices from all centuries of human history and from the ends of the earth, though it sound chaotic in the beginning, is composed according to a divine order, a deeper logos.

What is the nature of this order? If we understand the three formal categories of religion in general—vision, action and way—it will not be difficult to answer the question. Essential to religion is its *holy vision*, its vision of God or of an eternal value. Professor Rudolf Otto makes a deep, searching analysis of this in *The Idea of the Holy*.<sup>1</sup> From this vision follows an *action*, a deed in regard to God and to men. The holy vision is at the same time a vision of man's salvation; therefore it contains a certain view of a *holy way*, a path of salvation, which men and the world should choose. These three ideas—vision, action and way—are the fundamental formal scheme of the many-voiced choir. When we know this it is not difficult to find the order of the choir. It becomes evident that the polyphony of the choir is due to the fact that religious men sing different musical themes or melodies, so to speak, in the same key. To these various themes we now give our attention. Perhaps the discussion will be clearer if we abandon metaphorical language and replace the word theme by the Latin *habitus*, which can be translated by the English word *attitude*. The ultimate background of a religious phenomenon is a certain *habitus*, a certain attitude. This attitude is born out of a longing for the highest values in God. It arises under certain natural circumstances, but cannot be

<sup>1</sup>The object of the holy vision is subsumed under the category of the Holy. The analysis of this category made by Professor Otto, shows that there are two elements in the idea of the Holy, which are combined according to a higher necessity, namely a rational and an irrational element. Those qualities of God are rational which harmonize with our ethical, aesthetic, and rational ideals; for instance, love, righteousness, omnipotence. But this rational element is permeated by an irrational element which cannot be caught in words and which Otto indicates by the word "*Das Numinose*," the numinous. As such, Holiness exerts an ambivalent effect on the human mind. Go to the religious man is a "*mysterium tremendum*," a mystery which is to be feared which fills the heart with awe and deep respect; but it is also a "*mysterium fascinosum*," a mystery which is fascinating in a high degree, to which the heart turns in love and glad expectation.

explained by earthly conditions. Why a certain religious attitude arises is always mysterious; the only valid explanation is the word God. As far as man is religious, he has his share in a certain religious attitude. This attitude can thus be described as an objective entity. It is actualized in the natural processes of the human mind. In the quest after the highest good in God, the attitude is directed to that part of the reality of this world in which or behind which God is seen. The direction of the orientation of this attitude is, therefore, very important.

We are now ready to enter the many-colored and interesting world of religious phenomena and see how the principles of phenomenology find their application. We shall discuss the subject in connection with the three categories already mentioned: the holy vision, the holy action, the holy way. It is evident that in a sketch which does not pretend to be exhaustive only a few examples can be given.

### *I. The Holy Vision.*

a. One attitude which may be called typically modern is directed towards the values of the spirit. This is the background of the religious life of a great part of our generation. It is an orientation on the one hand towards the immaterial spirit and on the other towards the modern technical civilization created by that spirit. Modern men are prone to find God in these regions. I propose to call their vision the vision of God as the enlightening spirit, and the vision of the dark depths in God. It is typically modern in so far as modern men despise the authority of historical values and will not endure external coercion. They accept only the guidance of their own conscience and seek for certainty in their own spirit. Their conception of God will, therefore, be of a spiritistic type, God as the enlightening spirit. But there is another type of experience open to modern men, namely, modern technical civilization, the highest product of the spirit. This civilization has in our century shown demonic features which terrify and confuse our generation. Technical progress, which should be a blessing to mankind, turns out to be a means of its destruction, for it has created the seemingly permanent plague of unemployment and makes modern war worse than hell. The dark depths in God gape open. These facts of modern civilization are the stern

irrational background of the more optimistic rational conception of God as enlightening spirit.

b. Another attitude is directed towards time and history. This attitude is to be found in Mohammedanism, in the religion of Zoroaster and in the bhakti-religion of the school of Ramanuja in India, as well as in Christianity. In these religions history possesses a profound religious value. God reveals himself in time, which flows on as an ever-running stream. The kingdom of God is coming during the history of the world. In Christianity this world historical drama finds its fullest content and richest detail. The dénouement of this drama, which begins with the creation of the world and ends with the complete realization of the kingdom of God on earth in the last days, is the appearance of Jesus Christ. God, who reveals himself in history, is on the one hand the Holy One beside whom man is a weak and sinful creature; on the other hand He is the eternal Love, the firm rock of the faithful, bestowing forgiveness on the sinner.

c. A third religious attitude is that of the mystic. The mystic is not concerned with nature and civilization or time and history. Rising in the air like a skylark his attitude is directed towards the rooms—the empty rooms—where he can unite with God in unspeakable bliss. In mystical language there is a remarkable predilection for words which signify “empty.” That is because the irrational blissful fullness of God annihilates all earthly values, and can be defined only by the negative word “nihil.”

d. A fourth attitude is that of those impressed by the imperfections of life, those concerned chiefly with the problem of the sorrow and guilt of the finite world. This attitude has given birth to a vision of a higher reality. This vision may be found in the Greek tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, and in Buddhism. The Greek tragedies are the dramatic stories of heroes of the old myths, who incurred guilt notwithstanding their best intentions, for instance Oedipus, who as the redeemer of Thebes, marries his own mother without knowing it. When he does detect his guilt, the only way open to him is death. This destruction, however, is no calamity, but a realization of the highest possibilities. Nor should Buddhism be interpreted as sheer negativism. It is true that Buddha taught men to kill desire and the lust to live.

His view of our world is pessimistic. Life is sheer misery. But the Buddhist possesses the urge to despise the finite life only because he knows an unspeakable good, Nirvana, which makes worthless all worldly goods.

e. Finally, there is the religious attitude which is directed towards nature. It is typical not of modern but of primitive men, and of men of the classical period. Nature, in a way which it is hard for us to understand, was to them the unique revelation of the divine life. We people of the modern world are idealists in the sense that for us the unity of spirit and material is broken. In our value-judgment the spirit is the highest principle. Therefore our attitude is directed to the spirit and the values of the spirit. Our glorification of nature is sentimental, aesthetic. We have no real living contact with nature. In the end nature is to us dead material, and hence the most crucial problem for modern theology. We can best understand the character of the vision directed towards nature by examples. Most interesting and clear is the idea of a divine world order which is to be found in Chinese religion, in the Indian Vedas, in the Avesta, in early Greece and in Egypt. The common features of the conceptions in these different religions is that the divine world order is the true way of life for men. The way of mankind must harmonize with the way of the cosmos, otherwise the end is ruin. This implies that ethics is combined with the cosmic law in a sense unfamiliar to us. This is the meaning of the Vedic word Rta and of Asha in the Avesta. Very significant in this connection is the Chinese notion, Tao, the way of nature, which embraces all human actions. Rta, Asha and Tao are chiefly connected with heaven. They express the law of heaven. The Greek goddess Themis is the personification of the law of the earth, the law of the underworld. The same is partly true of the Egyptian goddess Maat. To say it more precisely: she is the law of the spontaneous divine life which conquers death. Maat means: truth, righteousness. Man can be successful only when he in his maat is in harmony with the divine Maat.

## *2. The Holy Action.*

From the holy vision follows holy action. This can be an action out from God towards the world, that is, a personal religious attitude; secondly, it can be an action towards God, that is, the cult,

and thirdly, it can be a speculation concerning God's nature. For want of space we must make a choice. Let us therefore examine the cult. This part of the subject will give us the opportunity to show that the vision always constitutes the inner structure of the holy action.

To the typical modern vision corresponds a type of cult which I like to call the worship of the spirit. The purest and noblest instance of this kind of cult can be found in the silent meetings of the Quakers. They are the complete realization of the well-known word of Jesus in the Gospel of St. John: "God is a spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." The silent worship of the Quakers is worship in spirit and truth. This is no empty silence. A well-known picture of a Quaker meeting shows the so-called "Presence in the Midst," namely, Jesus talking, whilst all human creatures are silent.

The second type of cult is the Protestant service, which might be entitled "The Worship of the Word." The center of the Protestant service is not the altar, as in the Roman Catholic church, but the pulpit. Our services are dedicated to the preaching of the gospel. The word is the vehicle of the divine dynamic, which is pervading time and making history into a history of salvation. This conception is dramatized in the ecclesiastical year. During the year, especially from Christmas until Easter, the holy drama of God's concern for his sinful creatures passes before the inner eye of the faithful. Therefore it is a fine idea of Professor Lindholm from Upsala, Sweden, to emphasize also the second part of the ecclesiastical year from Easter till Christmas, as concerned with the coming of the kingdom of God.

The third type may be called the cult as a holy drama. Behind this type will be found the vision which is directed towards nature. Not only to the ear which is listening, but to the eye which wants to see, the process of divine life is dramatized in a kind of holy performance. This kind of holy acting is found in the Roman Catholic mass. The mass is a very complex phenomenon composed of different elements. A characteristic feature, however, is the classic view of nature, nature as the revelation of God. At the culminating point of the service the Son of God is incarnated in the bread and wine by the magic words of the priest. Here we

have the primitive vision. The Greek orthodox church goes so far as to assign cosmic dimensions to this process. Its theology teaches that the whole cosmos is purified, because the earthly elements of bread and wine have become the body of Christ. According to this conception it is a holy necessity to repeat the drama again and again in order to realize the divine order. This is also the meaning of the Vedic sacrifice, of the Chinese cult of the state, of the Egyptian temple-offerings and of the cult of primitive religious peoples.

### 3. *The Holy Way.*

A statement earlier in the paper will be recalled, to the effect that the holy vision implies a certain view of the real way of salvation for the individual and the world. Again, in illustrating this, we are forced to make a choice from a rich diversity of religious ideas and ideals.

a. As to the individual, it is easy to show that here also the vision determines the conception of salvation. Let us take first the vision of God as our Father in heaven. The salvation which in this conception is offered to man, is his justification before God, who is Holiness and Love at the same time. How can men acquire this justification? Upon this question opinions differ. Religious people take two different ways, either the way of meritorious works or the way of grace alone. On the way of works we find the author of the Epistle of St. James, Pelagius and the Roman Catholic theology; on the way of grace St. Paul, Augustine and Luther are the guides. Now it is interesting to know that the same controversy exists in the bhakti-religion of India and in Japanese Buddhism. And we should remember in this connection, that these points of view originate from the attitude which is directed towards time and history.

The mystic way of salvation is in accord with its fundamental attitude. It is like a ladder with many rungs. The mystic climbs from one to the other, higher and higher. Each stage demands new training of the will and self-sacrifice, until at the end the mystic has reached ecstasy.

The way of salvation which is implied in the holy vision of nature is no inner process of the soul, but a way of living which embraces the whole life. In order to be saved man should achieve

harmony with the rhythm of divine life. In this rhythm there are several points which have decisive significance, namely, birth, the period of adolescence, marriage, death. Men should help the divine life to pass through these critical points. To this end various ceremonies are devised which are supposed to clear the channel for the stream of life.

b. But there is also a way of life for the world in general, or to say it more precisely, there are different conceptions of this way. First of all we shall take the different views of the history of the world. The vision which is directed towards nature has no real sense for history. Like the processes of nature its conception of time is cyclical. Like vegetation all human life has its periods of birth, blossoming, ripening, death and life again. The mystic also possesses no historical sense. He is indifferent to history, because he lives in the eternal. The true conception of history is born in Christianity and kindred religions, which are directed towards time. There the faithful sees God's time stride along through earthly, profane time.

In conclusion I should like to touch on the eschatological views which ensue from these different visions. It is evident that here again the mystic is indifferent to eschatology, because he lives in the eternal "now." The vision of nature includes the expectation of the death of this world. The old myths tell us that this death may come by ice, by fire, by water. After this catastrophic event a new world may arise. Eschatology in the real sense of the word is found in the religion of Zarathustra, in Mohammedanism, Judaism and Christianity. There the faithful trust that God who is the absolute sovereign of the world and life will in the end realize his kingdom.

## The End of the World<sup>1</sup>

WINSTON CHURCHILL

There is to be found in certain portions of the Old Testament a doctrine of non-contention, of non-controversial and non-condemnatory behavior, which appears to have originated with the Hebrew prophets. It was restated and expounded by Jesus of Nazareth, and afterward by Paul of Tarsus, and is called the gospel, the glad tidings. Upon the teaching of Jesus and Paul has supposedly been founded the religion known as Christianity; but this religion, while it has laid stress on peace and good will, has proved powerless to prevent the judgment of man by man and strife and battle between the nations of man. Wars have been waged, sects have risen and decayed, nations have flourished as a result of this contention by those who claimed to have derived their religion from the gospel.

The religion we know as Christianity took from the Jews what is called law in its necessitous and contentious aspect. This law implies the existence of a god who can command the operation of natural forces, send beneficial rain, or visit with drought and pestilence. He is conceived of in the image of a proprietor or landlord who, by virtue of an ability to turn off the water and turn on the heat, can evict and punish all who do not pay him rent or dues. When there are many gods contending for supremacy we have a kind of racketeering; but if a contract be made with one, regarded as the most powerful, as a condition of getting all the business he will grant concessions, and then a man knows just how much he has to pay for favors, protection and forfeits. Such a contract or covenant is that of Mount Sinai; but we seem to have something nearly approaching it in the ancient civilizations of Egypt and Babylonia during the periods of comparative social stability. The tutelar genius or daimon of a reigning dynasty is

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<sup>1</sup>This article, compiled by Mr. Churchill, is based on a chapter of his book, *The Uncharted Way*, copyrighted by Dorrance and Company, Philadelphia, and to be published by them in May.

virtually supreme: in the case of Rome there is the conception of Roma Dea. The Jews, however, seem to have perfected a materialistic monotheism.

It should be evident that the relationship of man under this law to the god or supreme proprietor is that of a vanquished to a victor in an unequal conflict, which is another way of saying that the relationship is essentially a contentious one. Man—even a king, the human proprietor under the god—is in a state of subjection. But in degree as man gains benefits in this subjection he likes it, and has for the god the dependent or vicarious love of the servant for the master who confers the favors, and an impulse to rebel is repressed. The impulse to freedom in rebellion, however, may at any time become strong enough to repudiate or ignore the contract. It is very appropriate, then, that this law is termed by Paul one of wrath and contention, as well as one of bondage and fear (*Romans IV, 15; VIII, 2*). The contract can be found in *Exodus* and *Leviticus*, and those who are bound by it are frankly called bondmen. One of the prophets of the Book of *Isaiah* calls it an agreement with hell, and a covenant with death (*Isaiah XXVIII, 18*). In the gospel the word death is used, not in the sense of killing the body, but of destroying what is called the soul, which we take to imply an evolutionary progression or becoming in a spiritual self-reliance and freedom. The law is also called the law of works, or work, or business: the latter because it is a contract or property law, and the Greek word for its authority is *exousia*, which means out of wealth or property. Such is our religious or property authority. It is a law of work because work may be defined as something performed in subjection against an impulse to be free.

The doctrine of the prophets contemplates a getting free from this law of bondage. But since they advocate a behavior in non-contention, it is obvious that the freedom they contemplate is not to be gained by rebellion. Rebellious behavior is to be regarded as unrealistic, and in the long run abortive, since the human proprietor, who is *in loco dei*, may be said to have at his back the uncontrolled forces of the universe, and the conquest of these is not to be achieved by defiance. An evolutionary rather than a revolutionary method of getting free is contemplated, one in and to which the proprietor must perforce be reconciled. In an amusing parable

this evolutionary behavior is referred to as a making friends with unrighteous mammon in order to be received into age-lasting, and presumably free habitations. It is called spoiling the strong man, or loving him to get his power or energy.

In order to get some conception of this behavior we must posit two instinctive impulses in man, as in all creatures. One is to perform functions or techniques which will lead to the satisfaction of the needs and appetites, and in man may be termed technical. When and as the creature is performing them in freedom, without inner opposition, we assume that he experiences a sensuous and spiritual delight. The other impulse is to preserve the body from harm, a fear impulse. In a self-reliant and self-determined behavior both of these instincts must be satisfied. If circumstances in the outer world are such at any time as to forbid or frustrate the satisfaction of the technical impulse, as when injury or deprivation be threatened, a response in obedience to the fear impulse must be made which will connect or associate in the mind with one leading back to the satisfaction of the appetites. The first part of such a response will satisfy fear, but it leads to skill or wisdom—words which the ancients used interchangeably. Therefore fear is said to be the beginning of wisdom or skill. In the self-reliant quests of the animal, when he is fending for himself in the wilderness, no new functions would be gained in an obedience to instinct, but in man, who supplements the equipment of his body by the control of natural forces, instinctive behavior is held to be evolutionary.

When the pricking of fear is felt, and that impulse opposes the performance of technical functions, the tendency to persist in these—which brings satisfaction to the appetites—is felt in craving. The animal, in respecting fear, and performing a function in this respect satisfying his appetites, is said to be obeying instinct or feeling, and thus gains his needs in self-direction. Now we assume that the gospel advocacy of a non-contentious behavior for man is an advice to obey instinct. But, as has been said, since man supplements the equipment of his body by the use of natural forces, the obedience to instinct would be with-science, or conscience. This is to say that if he learn to obey feeling he will have the satisfaction of knowing—a scientific sanction for instinctive behavior, called *suneidēsis* in the Greek of the Gospel. And the putting-together of functions

performed, that is, of knowledge gained in fear through the functions and of knowledge which satisfies the technical impulse, is what we assume to be the creative or evolutionary intelligence, *sunēsis*, which means a putting-together of knowledge in the mind. It will be knowledge original in that mind, and not imparted by other men.

In the law of works or bondage all the functions are performed in fear, in the repression of the technical impulse, which is rebellious. The knowledge and techniques are imposed in the exploitation of man by man. A gospel term for sin—as distinct from something implying the repudiation of obligations and duties in a contract—is *hamartia*, which means a missing of the mark, or way or direction of life achieved in instinctive behavior. Any behavior that gains rewards in fear, or any that gains them in craving or rebellion, would be a missing of the mark. Therefore the law of works is also called a law of sin, or *harmartia*. The technical impulse is repressed; and in any social order in which the norm of this law is approached, as in an hereditary or feudal system, there is little or no evolutionary progress. We have a determination by lot or luck, conceived of as the will of a proprietor god, and every man must be content to remain in the station of life to which the god has called him and practise what his father practised. Innovation is resisted. In this category obedience to conscience implies the repression of the technical impulse to rebel.

Enough has been said, perhaps, to indicate that the gospel doctrine, in recommending an obedience to conscience which would satisfy both instinctive impulses, recognizes science, which what we have known as religion, the superstitious and propitiatory behavior under the law of works, fails to do. The peaceful behavior which, in respecting the fear impulse of the law of works, accepts the duties and obligations with a view of synthesizing the two impulses, is said to be in conformity to an evolutionary Law called the Law of faith, which for convenience we shall spell with a capital. It is said to fulfill or complete the law of works and reconcile the age-old conflict in the self of divided man called that of science and religion. It would then confer what rational man desires, a scientific sanction for a social behavior to confer peace in the human species.

In the gospel meaning of the term, one who expounds Law is called a prophet, and the Greek word translated to prophesy in the Authorized Version means to expound. What is expounded, then, is Law. We have scribes or lawyers, judges in an evolutionary Law as well as in the property law. The former, in figurative language, are called lawyers instructed unto the kingdom of heaven (Matthew XIII, 52). A prophecy, therefore, in accordance with evolutionary Law would not imply a supernatural power to read the future, but would have the authority of a scientific dictum like that of a medical scientist who can foretell that a septic wound will lead to death if not attended to. So the prophet may with confidence predict the end of the world, the destruction of the civilizations of man unless and until an intelligence superior to that which builds them up be developed to save them.

These eschatological predictions may be found in Matthew XXIII, Mark XIII and Luke XXI, and are reaffirmations of prophetic pronouncements, especially those of the Book of Isaiah. The writers of the gospel narratives, whoever they were, evidently had no knowledge of the Law of faith, and the eschatological sayings of Jesus are given a supernatural tinge. The cataclysms which mark the end of the cycles of culture are said to be accompanied by earthquakes, the darkening of the sun, the roaring of the waves of the sea. The Isaian passages to which most of these refer would seem to be figurative. The catastrophe is war, the basic cause of which is said to lie in the divided, and therefore contentious mind of the individual; and the individual divided against himself implies a society divided against itself. Unless the division be healed, both are disintegrated.

There is, of course, a sense in which the unfavorable operation of natural forces causes wars. It is to be noted, for instance, in history that climactic changes causing droughts or increases of populations, have been coincident with periods of unrest and wars. The tribes of the desert, among whom were the Israelites, pressed in on and conquered the wealthier nations of the Fertile Crescent; the Greek tribes overcame the Mycenaean cities, the barbarians from the north overthrew Rome. In any civilization built up on the law of works and bondage, after a renaissance or birth of science the repressed technical urge begins to gain strength. When in turn it represses the fear impulse it implies a controversial assertion

of the validity of a scientific rather than a propitiatory method of dealing with power. Since it recognizes no contract with a god, it is unmoral and agnostic. When collectively asserted, in rebellion, it wrings concessions from the religious and property authority, first the right to leave a master, then further concessions to give women economic rights independent of the husband, and finally the right of divorce to either party in marriage. In our own cycle, in which science has made greater strides than ever before, the final result is an experiment in communism—a social order in which the technical urge represses the fear impulse. The churches are shut up, what has been known as religion is abolished and it becomes unlawful to pray. In the nations in which the property authority is still recognized the scientific authority gives a sanction for rebellion, and when the technical urge is frustrated there is the increase of vice and crime and luxurious living.

Revolution would seem to be the basic cause of the eschatological cataclysm, undermining the social order built up on the law of works. Those who have been exploited and deprived, both individuals and nations, are in the same situation as if under the pressure of purely natural restrictions, such as drought and famine. They are deprived of resources. Under these conditions we see the rise of the hero or strong man who is more or less a prototype of the heroes who led their tribes out of the wilderness and promised them wealth and plenty. The hero believes in his luck or star, and his tutelar genius or daimon becomes a national god. He is virtually a racketeer with whom no legal contract can be made, and his will is law. We might expect such a type to appear in a communistic, as well as in a fascist order, since communism as an attempt to found an order on the scientific authority of the technical impulse, in which the fear impulse is ignored, would be doomed to failure.

We may assume, then, when Jesus tells his disciples that one stone of the temple shall not be left upon another, that he is referring to the structure built on the law of works, which the technical impulse in man tears down. Yet it is powerless to build up another of its own. It is the elements conceived of as being behind the superstitious hero that ultimately destroy it, for fear is stronger than craving. The rains come, and the winds blow and beat upon the house, and it falls. In the Isaian language, the hail sweeps

away the refuge of lies, and the waters overflow the hiding place of the house not laid on sure foundations, and in the construction of which judgment has not been laid to the line nor righteousness to the plummet (Isaiah XXVIII, 17, 16). Yet Jesus says to those whom he has presumably instructed in the Law of faith not to be troubled when they shall see all these things, when they shall hear of wars and rumors of wars and nation shall rise against nation. When they see the fig tree putting forth her leaves, they know that summer is near. The catastrophe of disintegration is a confirmation of Law; and those who seek to conform to it and follow after peace need feel no fear. The scourge will pass them over.

If and when the doctrine implying an acquisition of an evolutionary intelligence, *sunēsis*, could be comprehended and expounded, we might have some such conception as that of the house of the law of works being gradually rebuilt while it is still standing. The man who learns to respect power would cease to rebel and seek freedom, not in revolution but in evolution. He who might have been a rebel, a menace and liability would become an asset in the social order. Hence the seemingly paradoxical advice of Paul in the thirteenth chapter of Romans to every soul to be subject to the power and authority of the property, to render tribute, custom, fear and honor where these are due; and of Jesus, who exhorts his hearers to observe and do all that is bidden them by those who sit in Moses' seat—but not after their works.

## Recovering the Lost Provinces of Religion

THE ASSOCIATE EDITOR

"Liberalism is dead, Long live liberalism." Such was the cry raised by our editor in the preceding issue of the JOURNAL. Liberalism may die in one person, institution, movement, he intimated, but liberalism in another person, institution, movement invariably accedes to the royal throne; and it was this doctrine of inevitable succession that our editor described. But where lies the dead monarch, and under what star must we look for the new?

The late king, whose obituary notices certain reactionary factions, products of another dynasty, are writing and reading with such glowing satisfaction, a doughty warrior, exemplified outstandingly in his personality the first of the regal characteristics of liberalism, that "nothing is complete, and thus nothing is exempt from criticism." Old King Critic we might call him.

His religious beginning in America was with but a petty state. A little over a hundred years ago he became involved in a long war with the hosts under the leadership of a stern, inhumanitarian Being who raked in eternal torture all who wittingly or unwittingly behaved contrary to His various whims and conceits. This war led to another against hosts who insisted that all men must bow down before a sort of totem shaped after the image of a son of man. A hundred years of war followed—against raging followers of an infallible book, against fanatics crusading first for a "special creation" and then for belief in pearly gates and golden streets. Finally, however, ominous signs of internal collapse appeared on Old King Critic's turning from his war on idols and false gods to God himself.

This was the beginning of his end. War began to lose its romance, conquest its glamor. Up to this time his hostilities against the Calvinistic godhead were in the name of humanitarian liberation; his war on the divine Christ was for universally valid truth; his war on the infallible Bible was in the interests of scholarship, sweet reasonableness and light; his war on the doctrine of the Fall

and Original Sin was in the interest of an evolutionary and emergent humanity; his assault on God himself was in the interest of an agnostic habit of mind which had greatly demonstrated its fruitfulness in fields of science. But now, with no further worlds to conquer, and yet unable to put down the sword, he turned upon his own humanitarian following. Thereupon such religion as had followed in his lead, calling itself liberal religion, saw the humanitarians hewed Agag-like to pieces. Humanitarians were not to be relied upon, Old King Critic explained; humanitarian efforts were too unpredictable, always getting vinegar for wine, stones for bread. They were not energetic enough either, he also complained; with men unemployed and children starving they invariably permitted their energies to be brought to a standstill by the exertions of pressure groups. In the place of humanitarians he put revolutionists. But at the prospect of revolution, revolution with reigns of terror, concentration camps and regimentation, the liberal religionists blanched, discreetly drew back, and looked about for other leadership. But Old King Critic was by no means through with his blood purges. He turned on universally valid truth and hewed it to pieces before his open-mouthed followers. The truth of truth? Let the prophet from the multitude of epistemological prophets in the courts of learning come forth to prophesy. How many among the confusion of voices are lying tongues? Or is truth a delusion? And truth, truth setting itself up as an end in itself, truth for truth's sake . . . truth for what? Truth versus "residue," versus "ideology," versus "rationalizing" . . . truth sociological: truth for you, truth for the Patagonian—can the two circles ever be brought together by inclusion and exclusion? He turned on the evolutionist and the emergent man; he tore their enticing dress to shreds and left them naked and ugly before the liberal religionist suitors—furies they were, joined in common law union with laissez-faire domestic anarchy and with the politician of international anarchy. Even the agnostic retired in the face of criticism that, courageous though his disavowal of knowledge of surrounding mystery had been, he could offer no adequate symbol for the *experienced* character of the surrounding mystery.

Disillusioned of certain temporarily liberal values of the past, baffled by the present, trembling at the future we cry nevertheless, "Liberalism is dead, Long live liberalism."

That throngs of laymen and their clerical leaders blanch at the prospects of following liberalism further, that their retreat into authoritarianism has become all but a panicky rout, does not disturb us. Disillusioning, baffling, fearful as the immediate prospects may appear to us, we know we cannot join the retreat, if only because once having lived through an authoritarian-liberal cycle we have no relish for the inevitable re-living which must follow retreat.

Instead of joining the rout we turn to the void of mystery before which the forces of theism had held out so long and so valiantly. This void of mystery, despite all agnostic protestations of indifference, is more than a chasm of blackness: it is manifestly an agglomeration of realities, which, although largely unseen and probably indescribable in rational categories, is a fit datum of experience and possible experience, and hence, in terms of experience at least, of a nature which may be characterized by aesthetic symbols that have about them a marked degree of probability. Moreover, now that we admit the *experienced* character of the surrounding mystery, are we not compelled by the logic of our position to look upon the theistic (including polytheistic and primordially animistic) notions of the past as aesthetic symbols for the experienced character of the unseen—symbols which for their time and place bore, both rationally and practically, the stamp of probability?

Liberalism's tragic flaw, the flaw which brought Old King Critic to his timely end, has been the tendency to overlook and hence to discard the *experience* which has accompanied the *characterization*. Similarly, the tragic flaw of authoritarianism has been the identification of experience *with* characterization; which flaw today is doubly tragic in that the characterizations of tradition are not such as readily lend themselves to communication in an era which has not recovered and cannot recover from the Alexandrian sway of Old King Critic.

The question which now looms large before religion which has long taken the label *liberal*, is: Should we not explore the characterizations of the past to ascertain, for a doubt-stricken age, the experience which was kernel to the characterization? In most cases we will find, no doubt, that whereas the characterization is no longer true (no longer probable; too patently mythical), the ex-

perience was valid. Moreover in becoming familiar with the experience-core of outmoded characterization, in seeing each item steadily and as a whole, may we not hope to discover characterizations adequate for our own age?

Here then lies a kingdom, manifestly abandoned by the retreating authoritarians, over which no one is so nicely fitted to rule as a son of Old King Critic, a son with a good measure of the critical blood of the old warrior, but with less of the tendency in him to coerce, with more of the democratic spirit activating him, and optimistic that now at last the kingdom of liberalism can be a kingdom of peace.

Who can predict what may come out of a re-examination of the experience, commonly labeled religious, which in the past has been associated with such characterizations as the Trinity and the various categories of Divinity, the Christ idea and its meaning in terms of actual human behavior, salvation in its various types, mysticism in its confusion of tongues, the Oversoul, the Chinese Tao, the Hindu Tat Tvam Assi, Karma, the Zen Buddhist concept of emptiness, Japanese Zazen, the Kingdom of Heaven?

Truly the kingdom of Solomon and not the kingdom of Saul is destined to succeed the kingdom of David. In the old warrior's demise, and in the soul-searching of his following, lies victory. And that it is victory the writer wishes to testify; for it is just this tack that liberalism has emphatically taken in the decade of his ministry, and with not a little heartfelt appreciation.

Liberalism is dead, Long live liberalism.

All Souls' Unitarian Church  
Kansas City, Missouri

R. LESTER MONDALE.

## Chronicle

J. BRYAN ALLIN

L. J. Van Holk, "The Nature of the Church," *Christendom*, Winter, 1940. Dr. Van Holk of Leyden, whose article on "The Idea of Sacrifice in Liberal Christianity" appeared in the winter issue of the JOURNAL, here suggests some eight definitions of the church and for the purposes of his article chooses another: "The ideal community of Christians in which different denominations share in different grades and ways, according to the gifts which are given them by the Holy Spirit." The enemies of such a church, he says, are individualism and clericalism. Clericalism is dangerous because of complacency and conceit, and there is almost never a Christian individual, the vast majority of Christians are creatures of community, the Christian Commonwealth is "wholesome and inevitable." Dr. Van Holk rejects as unacceptable, for many substantial reasons, the creedal formula: one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. He suggests an article of faith which I quote, "I believe in the fellowship of all who call and profess themselves Christians, who are guided by the Holy Spirit, worshipping God, preaching the gospel, serving man, providing a spiritual asylum, and who are victorious through hope." In order to achieve this creed fully he suggests that it may be necessary for us to remodel our denominations as Orders within one, true, catholic church. Neither individualism nor clericalism can bring about redemption or sanctification.

J. M. DeJong, "The Denomination as the American Church Form," reprinted from *Nieuw Theologisch Tijdschrift*, 1938. This essay is the outcome of the author's year of study in America, especially at Tufts and Meadville. Because Mr. De Jong's English will not bear critical examination this study may not receive the attention it deserves. That is unfortunate because he says many things of significance. By the use of a method which might be called comparative church history, he contrasts the American denomination with two of the forms suggested by Troeltsch, the church and the sect. Although our religious life began in these forms it later developed into denominations, voluntary organizations with a religious purpose, i.e., the salvation of souls; formed in loose democratic groups with no central authority. These have maintained the shibboleths of orthodox Protestantism and at the same time have embodied "the national sentiment of individualism and materialist expansion." They have created no theology and most of the American theological publications are really philosophical journals with articles by individual philosophers who have no connection with the church. American ministers have spoken strongly and effectively on many important issues and have helped prevent state absolutism, but

the moral standards of the big denominations have been and are provincial and sectarian. "Gambling and drinking are still supposed to be major sins, which is likely to prevent people from seeing the industrial situation and the dangers of secularisation in their real and gigantic proportions." The author also discerns a close relation between the typically American conception of the church and the American philosophy of pragmatism. Some hope for wider effectiveness is to be found in interdenominational cooperation, often enough possible only because of indifference to denominational lines. Copies of Mr. De Jong's essay (which runs to forty pages) may be secured at seventy-five cents each from the Rev. Prescott Wintersteen, First Unitarian Parish, Marblehead, Mass.

Jay William Hudson, "Recent Shifts in Ethical Theory and Practice," *Philosophical Review*, March, 1940. Professor Hudson, who is a Unitarian and is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Missouri, deals here with the period from about 1875 to the present. The change he finds most important is that from a formalistic ethics which held that one should do what is right because it is right, to a teleological ethics which holds that doing right is a means to an end. Moral obligation "is no longer founded upon God's will, whether expressed in revelation or in the 'laws of nature'; nor is it usually founded in metaphysics." It tends rather "to be based upon the authority of our fundamental and permanent desires over our merely passing and superficial wants. . . ." Another shift is from stress on individual responsibility to social responsibility, with emphasis on the political and economic orders, ending most often in *political* and *industrial* democracy. Professor Hudson suggests that ethicists need to concern themselves more with (1) logical methods, (2) the metaphysics of ethics, particularly its epistemology and ontology, and (3) with a psychology of moral experience and desire.

Julius Seelye Bixler, "The Contribution of *Existenz-Philosophie*," *Harvard Theological Review*, Jan. 1940. "The purpose of this paper is to offer a brief description of *Existenz-Philosophie* as it appears in the work of three men—Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Jaspers—and to make a few critical comments." Professor Bixler has done his task so well that it is impossible to reduce further his rather extended analysis. My only suggestion is that those who are concerned with some of the major problems of contemporary thinking (and some of the major errors, though Professor Bixler would not completely agree) and who have been considering reading Kierkegaard but have not found time, send to Harvard Press for a copy of this article.

E. Parl Welch, "Edmund Husserl—An Appreciation," *The Personalist*, Spring, 1940. Professor Welch presents two aspects of Husserl's thought, its logical basis and its epistemology. Science, says Husserl, has system because the world which it investigates has system. Unity and interconnection exist in the objects which science investigates, they are not im-

posed; and when this 'system' is discovered by intuition, scientific theories can be built up with the help of logical arguments. Thus when Husserl says that "science is theory," he means by 'theory' "the conceptual formulation of discoveries built upon a system of logical inferences or arguments." And he contended that if one examined the nature of the laws of logic one would find that logic and mathematics represent sciences of insight into an objective realm of entities which he calls 'essences.' These 'essences' are the general characteristics which physical bodies share with all bodies. In geometry there are certain ideal essences which are intuited, line, point, etc. Philosophy must be concerned with such essentials and its primary task is to make clear in intellectual intuition what extended things, psychic experiences, volitions, really are as phenomena, of what their structural properties consist, how the individual features are to be differentiated and conceptually described. Thus phenomenology is a method for investigating all sciences. And there is implied not only a logic of sciences but also a logic of experience.

Howard Ioan Fielding, "John Adams: Puritan, Deist, Humanist," *Journal of Religion*, Jan. 1940. John Adams, who was always attentive to theological polemics, started his education intending to become a minister, at least his family so intended, but he became a lawyer. He was subjected to many religious cross-currents. He studied at Worcester, "a hotbed of deistic belief," and in a Puritan atmosphere in which Calvinism was decaying read Cicero's *De Senectute*. His thinking was guided by two principles, "the supremacy of reason and the power of passion." The evils of religion and politics, he thought, arise from the unrestrained passions. Because neither nature nor the world has succeeded in setting limits to the desires or passions there must be other checks. In politics this means a government of laws, not men; in religion the check must come from moral law, the exercise of reason, the purgation of every mean and base desire. Mr. Fielding has admirably documented his excellent article and has written compactly.

L. P. Jacks, "Mr. Wells and the Fate of *Homo Sapiens*," *Hibbert Journal*, Jan. 1940. This article is an extended review of Mr. Wells's new book, *The Fate of Homo Sapiens*. Mr. Wells is quoted as saying, "Mankind which began in a cave and behind a windscreen will end in the disease-soaked ruins of a slum. What else can happen? What other turn can destiny take?" The only hope Mr. Wells can see lies in "the systematic reconditioning of his [man's] mental life." For Mr. Jacks the answer is charity. I cannot help thinking that German theological journals, if such there be, would find it difficult to get an imprimatur for this kind of discussion. As the casualty list of nations where both mental life and charity are disappearing increases, we can no longer dismiss Mr. Wells's predictions as we used to dismiss them. And hoping that he is a liar will do nothing for *our* mental life and little for *our* charity.

## Book Reviews

### A HISTORY OF UNIVERSALIST SOCIAL ACTION

Restraint and a sense of proportion keep this book<sup>1</sup> from being "a glowing tribute" to the men and women of the Universalist tradition who have been moved by socio-ethical considerations to do good works. Intended to be a rapid record of the social idealism of Universalists who insisted that theology yield practical results, the little volume tells an exciting story of earnest humanitarians and zealous liberals who saw human needs and strove to meet them. An honest enthusiasm lends warmth to the writing, but an honest modesty refuses to gush about the Universalists who were first to do this or first to do that. Dr. Lalone had half an eye on the pride of his fellows in faith when he set down their saga, and he confesses that the present generation seems strangely unaware of the glorious past, but he writes a worthy chronicle. There is not much that his critical judgment will be compelled to regret.

One is moved to consider that good works will not insure the endurance of a theological impetus which supposedly accounted for the good works in the first place. The vitality of a movement like the Universalist movement is not guaranteed by yesterday's abolitionist zeal, or its record in prison reform, or its settlement houses and homes for the aged. This is said without wishing to appear deprecatory about such good works. But the fact remains that, all comments to the contrary notwithstanding, the truth of Universalism, whatever it may be, is not adequately represented by a record of its social achievements. Written remembering which transmits meanings from one age to the next, has a pitiless way of taking those things for granted, and then pushing on into the realm of ideas and insights and their relative proximity to something called the Eternal.

It is incidentally disconcerting to reflect that humanitarian passion is not motivated solely by liberal theology. It would be comforting if it were so. Liberal theology affects men so that they build hospitals, reform prisons and feel more humane in general, we would say. But Catholics build hospitals, and colleges, and orphanages and settlement houses; they project labor colleges and specialize in industrial reconciliation, and they launch great movements like the co-operative movement in Nova Scotia. Certain emotional sects, we are told, had the best hospitals in Ethiopia. Every denomination, we must remember, has its gallery of illustrious children who fought the good fight.

In fact, when we are made to appraise the actual results of liberal humanitarianism and are compelled to set this total over against the grand total, two things happen. First, liberals see their share as a modest one; second, they wonder why more was not accomplished. Yet we must add that liberals have provided an indispensable leaven.

One is struck forcibly in Dr. Lalone's book by the fact that liberal principles in their theological setting did not stand up with distinction against

<sup>1</sup>AND THY NEIGHBOR AS THYSELF. By Emerson Hugh Lalone. Boston: Universalist Publishing House, 1939. 126 pp. \$1.00.

the popular hue and cry at the time of the Civil War or at the time of the World War. Of course, it is easy after the event to wish that some unusual good sense and strength of character had set Universalists apart from the mass madness. But that was not the case. Therefore we are driven to the unpleasant realization that the dominant social-political thought of the time, in each case, prevailed completely over a liberalism which ostensibly should have known a little better. One might at least expect some record of heroic protest, some notable story of suffering, fearlessly and redemptively borne. But Dr. Lalone rather sadly makes us see that the powerful middle-class considerations which have always ruled the ultimate actions of liberal religion mounted the saddle and rode the horse. There is something bitter, tragic and contemporary in Dr. George Emerson's words, written in *The Universalist Quarterly* for October 1861, the time of the Civil War: "Christian duty requires that we sustain the government in its efforts to crush this rebellion. . . . We acknowledge the authority of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and that authority commands us to use the sword—to use the sword because no other resort can be effective—to use the sword, not in a spirit of malice or retaliation, but in love and pity toward those whose infatuation compels the dread alternative." One shudders to imagine a loving man of good will sincerely manning a machine gun or dropping bombs on an enemy city, in accordance with a modern version of the same position.

Dr. Lalone's book makes us realize that Universalists definitely stand in the tradition of humanitarianism, not radicalism. Genuinely concerned to reform evils, courageous against specific wrongs, Universalists, like other liberals of the past and the present, have busied themselves with alleviating the abuses of a social system and have not distinguished themselves either for profound social analysis or advocating far-reaching reconstructions. The spirit of revolution was not original with liberal religionists, and apparently there is little to show that any of the prophets ever recognized the deeper criticisms of the social order. Belief in the divinity of man and optimism about the direction of the universe have always encouraged liberals to be benevolent but unrealistic. The very considerable and very important achievements of liberals and humanitarians are not to be sneezed at, but no one should assume that radical social action can be expected from middle-class religionists.

Inevitably the writing of a book like this becomes a factor in undergirding denominational morale and pride. It is amusing to notice that the effort to coalesce Universalism and Unitarianism into the Free Church of America has really resulted in a revived denominational loyalty on both sides of the fence.

Perhaps the next chronicle of liberal social action will include a chapter on how the liberal churches in the fifth decade of the twentieth century reacted to the effort to recreate the ecumenical mind, about which little thus far has been done in liberal circles.

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M. A. KAPP.

## SCIENCE, RELIGION, AND HUMAN DESTINY

M. C. Otto, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Wisconsin, is a member of our Unitarian fellowship who has received far less appreciation in our ranks, we may be sure, than he would have if his writing had flattered more traditional conceptions of liberal religion. His neglect among Unitarians is hard to explain, because he both speaks and writes superbly, unless it be that we prefer to hear a Methodist Bishop or a Roman Catholic editor who are theologically to the right of our position, than to face and evaluate the challenges of those who are in our own vanguard.

There is much in this volume<sup>1</sup> that will not be new to any who have followed the trend of thought which C. S. Peirce, William James and John Dewey represent. But Professor Otto has an intelligibility that Dewey lacks. This clarity is not to be mistaken, however, for any lack of profundity. Moreover, in his understanding of the source of ideals and their potency for modern life, Dr. Otto makes his own contribution.

In this volume the author criticizes our contemporary life and its shortcomings; the failure of philosophy to point the way out of present perplexities; the negations and perils of science; the otherworldliness of organized religion. But he does not turn to the traditional assurances of theistic religion or of dualistic philosophy for the comprehensive pattern that is needed to dignify life and guide men through its frustrations and dangers. Rather, he reaches, in a chapter bound to disturb many, a positive affirmation of non-belief in the God of theism as ethically harmful and logically improbable. He does not rest his case on agnosticism but employs in reverse form favorite arguments used by the theist in defense of his faith object. And this in behalf of the enhancement of man's life on earth.

In a discussion of "The Two Atheisms" Professor Otto shows that a man may be a cosmic atheist and be a more useful and religious member of society than some person who professes cosmic theism. An ethical atheist is one who lives as if there were nothing sacred in human beings. "God is spoken of as if his will were central to human affairs, when, in point of fact, it is only the echo of a rumor that disturbs the outskirts of living. The alleged theism is a matter of words; it is not a program of faith and action. . . . The deeper meaning of atheism must be sought in everyday conduct, not in metaphysical views."

This is perhaps the reason *The Human Enterprise* is dedicated to the attempt to relate philosophy to everyday living. "The plain man is interested and must be interested in knowledge of the kind of reality with which he must come to grips in his daily life," not in mystical raptures. *Reality* is that which demands that we make an adjustment to it. What the plain man needs is a better quality of ideals and ideas to help him in these adjustments.

Those who feel the need for combatting the present effort of reaction to

<sup>1</sup>THE HUMAN ENTERPRISE. An attempt to relate philosophy to daily life. By M. C. Otto. New York: F. S. Crofts & Co., 1940. 285 pp. \$2.25.

belittle human nature will welcome Professor Otto's discussion of man. The reductive fallacy, which seeks to place significance in the remote, the less complex, and to show that "a thing's real nature is revealed in its primitive rather than its developed form," is largely to blame for inadequate estimates of man. "Man is what he is, not what he was," and the cynical eyes that can see in him no real progress beyond the animal or savage do not see the whole man. Man has his uniqueness in his capacity for forming purposes and inventing the instruments of their realization, in his ability to take his own destiny in hand. But instruments of his own making also counter his path and obstruct his progress.

One such instrument to which Professor Otto addresses himself is the business corporation. Raising again the question he had already posed in his earlier volume *Natural Laws and Human Hopes*, shall business be *all* of life or merely part of it?, he shows how great numbers of men are being forced to surrender their lives to the enterprises necessary for making a living. But "human nature is not business nature." He might have added, "And the corporation is a mythical individual with no body to kick and no soul to be damned," a person before the law, but one that menaces, by its ubiquitous aggregations of power, the factors in man that constitute man's uniqueness and dignity.

Reviewing recent trends among scientists to repair the damage that was done by earlier men of science who made a fatal compromise with organized religion and permitted the power which they turned loose in the world to run amok without responsible guidance, Professor Otto shows that an inspiring and realistic basis for a more secure human future can still be forged by scientific method in the service of humanity. "Science is ethically neutral in its processes, but not in its results." Hence men of science must, as citizens, assume a share of responsibility for the human effects of their methods. This they can do by choosing as scientists to work on problems and projects that will prove constructive in the social order and be "intimately linked up with human history and destiny." "The association of strict scientific procedure with human and social programs is an outstanding characteristic of our age," and hope is to be found in this direction.

We should like to know to what extent the course that human events must take (if humanity is to survive upon the planet and if the democratic values are to survive with it), is determined for man by the process that created him. Is Harold Laski correct when he tells the nations as he did a few years ago that they must "Co-operate or die!" and is this mandate inherent in the biological process as well as in the sociological process within which man develops his ideals and makes his adjustments? It seems to the reviewer that a more thoroughgoing naturalism would have made even more explicit than Professor Otto has done, in this volume, the interdependence of natural laws and human hopes.

The Third Unitarian Church in Chicago.

EDWIN H. WILSON.

## IS A UNITED PROTESTANTISM POSSIBLE?

This book<sup>1</sup> is one of the latest to essay an answer to this pressing question. The title, however, is ambiguous, lacking a definitive preposition. The author sets forth a challenge *to* Protestantism; whereas, the title seems to connote a challenge *of* Protestantism. Prof. Moehlman is Colgate Professor of the History of Christianity in Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, and his book represents the work of a scholarly and truly liberal mind.

One who is interested even a little in theological lore reads most of the chapters in this book with keen enjoyment. Such topics as the Fundamental Creeds, Apostolic Succession (which he terms a "myth"), the New Testament organization of the Church, and the Sacraments are handled in a clear, masterly way and with a minimum of class-room verbiage. The chapter on "The Earliest Story of the Cross" is startling even to those who have thought themselves fairly well informed in that field. The pages devoted to the refutation of Matt. 27:25 and John 19:15 contain no comfort for anti-Semites.

My attention was first directed to this volume by the fact that Universalists and Unitarians are mentioned in it by name and without prejudice. These references are brief but pivotal. In a catalogue of Protestant churches of the democratic pattern Prof. Moehlman includes Unitarians and Universalists; and he implies throughout the entire study that no union could be effected after any other pattern. He quotes the "five points" of our respective bodies in proof of his conclusion that we "would probably not apply for admission to any united evangelical church." Evangelical is a word of which I have always been jealous. Genealogically speaking, it is a beautiful word with a lovely meaning, and one which, in my opinion, sounds the very keynote of our liberal gospel. But, because of the narrow sectarian sense in which it is currently employed, I must surrender it, though with wistful regret, to those who commonly regard liberalism as anathema.

The author quotes at some length from an article in *The Arbitrator* by the late Dr. S. M. Crothers in which the point is clearly established that "to the Unitarian the indispensable condition of Christian Unity would be the substitution of a simple declaration of purpose for the traditional statement of dogmatic opinion." Though the article in question was written more than twenty years ago, it is doubtless a correct statement of the attitude of our two fellowships at the present time. One who understands the liberal theologian's use of the term creed will demur at the author's implication that our respective "five points" are employed in the same literal sense as are the creeds of the orthodox churches.

Does Prof. Moehlman believe that a union of Protestantism is imminent, or even possible? Not imminent, certainly. By implication possible, per-

<sup>1</sup>PROTESTANTISM'S CHALLENGE. An historical study of the survival value of Protestantism. By Conrad Henry Moehlman. New York: Harpers, 1939. 286 pp. \$2.50.

haps; though he is cautious in the expression even of his hopes. But he is obviously convinced that any possible union would have to be upon the basis indicated very early in the book as the traditional ground of the Unitarian and Universalist denominations. His rather halting conclusion may be gleaned from these words on the very last page: "There is no contemporary church which meets all of the New Testament specifications, and yet every contemporary church possesses some of the characteristics of the New Testament church. If the modern churches could adopt an historical attitude toward their claims and also toward the New Testament, they might easily unite in a vital fellowship adequate to the needs of the present age."

The Unity Universalist Church in Oak Park, Illinois.

FRANK D. ADAMS.

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#### A UNIVERSALIST SCHOLAR ON PHENOMENOLOGY

"Phenomenology" is a difficult word to pronounce and the subject for which it stands is a difficult one to study. To the casual reader it is apt to seem at first merely another form of the indulgence in logic-chopping and word-manipulation for which German philosophy has been notorious. Yet one who studies it with care will find in it one of the most significant philosophical developments of the last twenty-five years.

In effect, phenomenology steps into the breach created by the feud between idealism and realism and borrows from each without surrendering to either. With the idealists it focusses attention on consciousness; with the realists it insists that consciousness does not create all it knows. The phenomenologist maintains that what is now needed for progress in philosophy, as well as science and culture, is a more thorough-going analysis of what it is that presents itself to mind, understanding by the word "mind" a logical rather than a psychological process. What are the meanings, significances, and validities that make our sense world what it is and give it intelligibility? To answer this question we must divest ourselves of all private prejudice and of all connection with what goes on in the world of space and time and ask what each object, thing, or meaning is in itself. Its own intrinsic essence must be seen, together with its relation to all other essences. It is possible, say the phenomenologists, to develop a type of intuition or "immanent inspection" by which these essences may be passed in review, considered for what they are, and placed in their appropriate positions in the realm of essential things.

Phenomenology came into being in the mind of Professor Edmund Husserl of Freiburg and was developed by him as a new method of logical inquiry. Its fruitfulness was soon shown in the way it was taken up by others. Scheler and Nicolai Hartmann applied it to a theory of values, Heidegger to a theory of being, Geiger (who came to this country and, before his untimely death, taught at Vassar College) used it for his theory of aesthetics, and traces of it are to be found in Otto's original and widely read

treatment of religion in *The Idea of the Holy*. Husserl himself was a profound thinker and a gentle spirit who was honored on his seventieth birthday in 1929 by the whole of Germany as the dean of German philosophers. Nine years later he died almost in oblivion because the fact of his Jewish descent had been allowed to outweigh in popular opinion his real philosophical achievement.

Students of religion as well as of philosophy will thank Professor Welch for bringing Husserl's work so adequately to their attention as he has done in this book.<sup>1</sup> Phenomenology has special relevance to religion, first because it offers an attack on naturalism, second because it establishes the intrinsic values of the good life as valid in their own right, and third because implicitly, and to some extent explicitly, in Husserl's latest writings, it envisages a common ideal of reason in which all nations and peoples share. This book offers an excellent introduction to Husserl's thought, a competent comparison with American forms of realism, and a valuable bibliography. Since the author plans to bring out a larger work three minor slips should perhaps be noted. An article by the present reviewer which is assigned to the *Journal of Philosophy* actually appeared in the *Journal of Religion*, Professor D. C. Macintosh's name should be spelled without a "k," and the Greek word *epochē* should not have the "rough breathing" which the printer gave it.

Harvard Divinity School.

J. S. BIXLER.

#### LIBERALISM AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

This book<sup>2</sup> is not for "one-eyed men." None such will get much out of it. But any and all who are willing to accept Dr. Skinner's challenge to open both eyes, to see life steadily and see it as a whole will greatly profit from the penetrating analysis which characterizes this volume.

Dr. Skinner is no "easy-going optimist." Indeed he rejects that term as applied by certain men who seek refuge from reality in "easy-going pessimism." He faces the facts of human nature's limitations, but he does not ignore man's goodness and strength, even though he admits man's capacity to create evil as well as good conditions. He says, "It matters immensely how we answer this challenge (of evil). What we think, will in due time build itself into some sort of reality." Then he proceeds to analyze three approaches to this whole problem of evil as presented in *The Word of God and the Word of Man* by Karl Barth, *Revolution and Nihilism* by Hermann Rauschning, and *Moral Man and Immoral Society* by Reinhold Niebuhr.

Out of this welter of what, to every healthy-minded liberal, may be described as "defeatism" he leads us through paths of clear thinking to heights where we are able to survey the scene of contemporary life and see relationships lost sight of by both the "easy-going optimist" and the "easy-going pessimist."

<sup>1</sup>EDMUND HUSSERL'S PHENOMENOLOGY. By E. Paul Welch. Los Angeles: The University of Southern California Press, 1939. 100 pp. \$1.50.

<sup>2</sup>HUMAN NATURE AND THE NATURE OF EVIL. By Clarence R. Skinner. Boston: Universalist Publishing House, 1939. 163 pp. \$1.00.

This is a book that might well be used as a text for an adult discussion group, and should prove invaluable as an antidote to influences everywhere prevalent, which unless challenged and defied may easily pave the way for inroads on all that the liberal has labored to create of satisfying values.

Here is no Pollyanna philosophy but a stern facing of reality and a quiet demand that the reader do likewise.

St. John's Universalist Church, Joliet, Ill.

W. H. MACPHERSON.

### A PHILOSOPHY FOR RURAL AMERICA

The myriads of cubicles which I saw last summer in the Department of Agriculture Building in Washington, spelled for me mechanical bureaucracy, functional atomism, directed by the chief atom in the main office. A recent volume<sup>1</sup> by the Under Secretary of Agriculture, member of the Unitarian Church in Washington, indicates, however, that the Department aspires to a philosophy for its manifold specialized activities.

In interpreting a series of lectures given for this purpose during 1938 in the Graduate School of the Department,<sup>2</sup> Mr. Wilson begins by pointing out the glaring differences between agriculture in 1790 and in 1938. Science has outstripped our folkways. "The real problem of this age is the problem of integrating the new forms of behavior which have followed science into society." "The way of dictatorship is a way which various peoples of the world have taken because of the inadequacy of their previous institutions, economic and political." Democracy is less spectacular, because it involves continuous give-and-take between all kinds of people. The compromise program of congressman-philosopher T. V. Smith is the political embodiment of this give-and-take.

Until recently, American farmers have remained aloof from the democratic process. This makes the farmer easy prey for the demagogue with the ready-made panacea. The alternative, says Mr. Wilson, is community discussion and decision.

The current farm program, with its many "county boards" to decide innumerable local policies, meets with derision in the public press. But it is an interpretation of democracy in our own folk-ways, which the farmer understands. Students of religion will appreciate the author's solicitude for the subconscious and irrational folk forms. Moreover, the "county board" technique provides contact between the administrators, the technicians, and the people. It is the absence of contact which produces bureaucracy. But most of all perhaps, our country needs cross-fertilization: give-and-take between individual, group, and state. The farmer must look beyond his own pressure-group.

<sup>1</sup>DEMOCRACY HAS ROOTS By M. L. Wilson. Preface by Charles A. Beard. New York: Carrick & Evans, 1939. 199 pp. \$1.75.

<sup>2</sup>The 1939 lectures, by outstanding world scholars, are available free from the Department, in mimeographed form, under the title "Science: Its History, Philosophy, and Relation to Democracy." Bound, these essays would easily rate as an intellectual "Best Seller."

The book is an example of dynamic liberalism: common sense inspired with urgency. It is worth study as a modern functional interpretation of democracy.

The Unitarian Church of Hinsdale, Illinois.

EDWARD W. OHRENSTEIN.

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#### COMMENDED TO THE PREACHER<sup>1</sup>

Although THE JOURNAL OF LIBERAL RELIGION customarily notices only books in its special field, readers of Professor Guérard's brilliant "Meditation on the Élite" in the winter number will be glad to be reminded of his *Preface to World Literature* recently published. Professor Guérard, joining the faculty of Stanford University in his young manhood in 1906 as a teacher of French, has held successively in that institution chairs in the History of French Culture and General and Comparative Literature. Educated in Paris he has spent the whole of his teaching and literary career in America, and practically all of his many books have been written and published in English. Few have his background of training, scholarship and environment, as well as his mastery of the art of writing, for such a task as this book represents. The preacher, to whom literature is a never-failing mine of homiletical material, will find the book of particular value. The younger preacher, laying out a course of reading duly balanced with general literature, will discover in the appendices, in which the author tries his hand at the pleasant task of making up a list of the best books, an unmatched guide, especially to the great works that he must not miss. We commend especially Appendix II, "The best which has been thought and said in the world," divided in two sections, "World Classics" and "Contemporary World Literature." Setting these lists before him, a budgeteer of time could flavor his hours assigned to reading with delight for a life-time.

And there is delight also in Professor Guérard's own glowing pages—delight and constant stimulus. The maker of sermons, if we mistake not, will bear a sheaf of notes away with him when he finishes the book. The chapter on the social approach to literature, including a discussion of what art is for, will be found particularly suggestive. Can art be practiced for the sake of a cause? is one of the questions taken up. In the end, the author defines art in terms very close to religion, "a protest against death, and the reassertion of the unique. In its affirmation of life art is akin to love and to mystic communion, but this experience is ineffable. 'The sole language of the mystic is silence.' Yet art is communication. The artist cannot manifest himself to us, and even to himself, without abandoning his ivory tower. But the ivory tower remains his true home. The artist thus points the way to the art that transcends communication, art for art's sake."

The Meadville Theological School.

SYDNEY B. SNOW.

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<sup>1</sup>PREFACE TO WORLD LITERATURE. By Albert Guérard. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1940. 536 pp. \$3.50.

## A LITTLE ANTHOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS VERSE

Although issued in ephemeral form as a Lenten Manual, this paper-covered booklet<sup>1</sup> is one that any lover of poetry will give permanent place to on his shelves. Its compiler, who for twenty years has been a persistent student of current English literature, has drawn upon his wide knowledge of that literature for short poems, and excerpts from poems, that strike the present-day devotional note. Some of the authors are well known; others are obscure, and would be difficult for the reader to find except in these pages. "The poets of today, no less than those of other centuries," writes the compiler in a foreword which is itself a beautifully expressed incitement to the mood of worship, "have a wealth of glowing experience to communicate to us." Here some of these poets are, "aflame with the love of life and a vision of its significance," gathered into an anthology none the less welcome for its compression.

Of only less value than the poems themselves are the brief comments with which the compiler completes and enriches each page. When F. G. Peabody's *Mornings in the College Chapel* was first published some thirty-five or forty years ago, many preachers found in these three-minute discourses the germ of full length sermons. Perhaps preachers of this decade might find the small pages of *Address to the Living*, with poems and comments, and sometimes little collects for the day, equally suggestive.

We are grateful to Mr. Hitchen for this loving compilation of material for a season of worship, which will, we believe, bring the joy and the meaning of worship nearer to many through many seasons.

The Meadville Theological School.

SYDNEY B. SNOW.

## PRAYERS FOR TODAY'S MOOD

This little book<sup>2</sup> should be in every collection of modern devotional literature. Its thirty-five prayers are a culling from many composed by the author during five years' service as Chaplain of Mills College. Poetical in expression, they are printed in poetical form. They are notable not only for the beauty but for the thoughtfulness of their imagery. The time-honored and familiar, retained only when it truthfully expresses the present mood of worship, is welded with newer phrases of fresh significance. The foreword is as clear and complete a summary of the modern experience of worship as could be compressed in half a dozen pages; no better guide could be placed in the hands of a young person craving worship but doubtful of its reality. The same feeling for art in worship that is shown in the composition of the prayers is shown in the topography of this exquisite little volume.

The Meadville Theological School.

SYDNEY B. SNOW.

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<sup>1</sup>ADDRESS TO THE LIVING, A Lenten Manual. By Herbert Hitchen. Boston: The Beacon Press, 1940. 63 pp. 10 cents.

<sup>2</sup>LET US PRAY. By Robert French Leavens, Chaplain at Mills College, 1932-1937. Mills College, California: Eucalyptus Press, 1939. 35 pp. \$1.50.

## CONTENTS OF VOLUME I

55

Abbreviations: 1—Summer, 1939; 2—Autumn, 1939; 3—Winter, 1940;  
 4—Spring, 1940.

|  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| ADAMS, JAMES LUTHER. Why Liberal? .....  | 2, 3                |
| The Liberalism That is Dead.....   | 3, 38               |
| ALLIN, J. BRYAN. Chronicle.....  | 2, 44; 3, 43; 4, 42 |
| BETH, KARL. Institution and Spirit.....  | 1, 24               |
| BLEEKER, C. J. The Inner Structure of Religion.....  | 4, 21               |
| BROGDEN, JOHN. Some Implications of G. H. Mead's Social<br>Psychology for Theology .....             | 2, 35               |
| BROWN, WILLIAM ADAMS. Ecumenicity and Liberalism.....  | 1, 19               |
| CHURCHILL, WINSTON. The End of the World.....  | 4, 31               |
| DIMOCK, MARSHALL E. What Does Labor Want?.....   | 2, 27               |
| ELIOT, FREDERICK MAY. The Fame and Influence of Emerson's<br>Divinity School Address .....           | 1, 5                |
| GUÉRARD, ALBERT, SR. Meditation on the Élite.....  | 3, 3                |
| HARTSHORNE, CHARLES. The Three Ideas of God.....   | 3, 9                |
| MARTIN, OLIVER. Sin and Sinners.....   | 4, 3                |
| MONDALE, R. LESTER. Recovering the Lost Provinces of Religion  | 4, 38               |
| OTTO, M. C. Can Science Accept God?.....   | 4, 11               |
| NASH, VERNON. Leading Protestants Advocate a Federal World<br>Government .....                       | 2, 9                |
| SKINNER, CLARENCE R. The Nature of Evil.....   | 2, 19               |
| TIGNER, HUGH STEVENSON. Policy and Prospectus.....   | 1, 3                |
| VAN HOLK, L. J. The Idea of Sacrifice in Liberal Christianity.....                                   | 3, 17               |
| WELCH, E. PARL. Phenomenology and the Doctrine of Man.....   | 1, 33               |
| WILLIAMS, GEORGE H. Priest, Prophet and Proletariat: A Study<br>in the Theology of Paul Tillich..... | 3, 25               |

## BOOK REVIEWS

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| BRADLEY, PRESTON. <i>Life and You</i> . By Charles H. Lyttle.....                                     | 3, 55 |
| DODGE, EDWARD. <i>The Fleshly Screen</i> . By Herbert Hitchén.....                                    | 3, 52 |
| FLOWER, J. C. <i>Religious Experience</i> . By Edward W. Ohrenstein.                                  | 1, 46 |
| GARRARD, L. A. <i>Duty and the Will of God</i> . By Rowland Gray-<br>Smith .....                      | 3, 48 |
| GUÉRARD, ALBERT. <i>Preface to World Literature</i> . By Sydney B.<br>Snow .....                      | 4, 53 |
| HEERING, G. J. <i>De Kracht Van Het Geloof</i> . By Donald Har-<br>rington .....                      | 3, 46 |
| HITCHÉN, HERBERT. <i>Address to the Living</i> . By Sydney B. Snow.                                   | 4, 54 |
| HNIK, FRANK M. <i>The Philanthropic Motive in Christianity</i> . By<br>Clarence R. Skinner .....      | 3, 49 |
| HOLT, RAYMOND V. <i>Progress and Christianity</i> . By Edward W.<br>Ohrenstein .....                  | 1, 46 |
| <i>The Unitarian Contribution to Social Prog-<br/>        ress in England</i> . By Charles H. Lyttle. | 1, 44 |

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| HUDSON, JAY WILLIAM. <i>Old Faiths Perish.</i> By Charles E. Snyder .....                            | 1, 48 |
| LALONE, EMERSON HUGH. <i>And Thy Neighbor As Thyself.</i> By M. A. Kapp .....                        | 4, 45 |
| LEAVENS, ROBERT FRENCH. <i>Let Us Pray.</i> By Sydney B. Snow ..                                     | 4, 54 |
| LEE, E. G. <i>Christianity in Chains.</i> By Andrew X. Mahy.....                                     | 3, 51 |
| MOEHLMAN, CONRAD HENRY. <i>Protestantism's Challenge.</i> By Frank D. Adams .....                    | 4, 49 |
| NIGG, WALTER. <i>Geschichte des Religiösen Liberalismus.</i> By Karl Beth .....                      | 3, 45 |
| OTTO, M. C. <i>The Human Enterprise.</i> By Edwin H. Wilson.....                                     | 4, 47 |
| RATTRAY, R. F. <i>Fundamentals of Modern Religion.</i> By Edward W. Ohrenstein .....                 | 1, 47 |
| SKINNER, CLARENCE R. <i>Human Nature and the Nature of Evil.</i> By W. H. Macpherson.....            | 4, 51 |
| SPARHAM, G. J. <i>The Problem of Evil.</i> By Edward W. Ohrenstein ..                                | 1, 47 |
| SPENCER, S. <i>The Meaning and Value of Religion.</i> By Edward W. Ohrenstein .....                  | 1, 47 |
| STUART, GRACE. <i>The Achievement of Personality.</i> By M. O. Bates .....                           | 3, 50 |
| <i>Tufts Papers on Religion.</i> By Tracy M. Pullman.....  | 2, 47 |
| VAN SCHAICK, JOHN, JR. <i>The Characters in Tales of a Wayside Inn.</i> By William Wallace Rose..... | 3, 53 |
| VINEY, BASIL. <i>The Revelation of God in Nature and Humanity.</i> By Edward W. Ohrenstein.....      | 1, 46 |
| WELCH, E. PARL. <i>Edmund Husserl's Phenomenology.</i> By J. S. Bixler .....                         | 4, 50 |
| WILSON, M. L. <i>Democracy Has Roots.</i> By Edward W. Ohrenstein.                                   | 4, 52 |

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